

## Remarks at a Dinner for Hillary Clinton

*August 9, 2000*

Thank you. Thanks for the tie. You know, I got interested in ties when I realized that the older and grayer I got, the more it would be the only sort of fashion statement I could ever make for the rest of my life. Thank you, Tom; thank you, Pam; thank you, Brasim, and thank you, ladies and gentlemen, for coming.

I'll tell you what I would like to do. I'd like to just talk for a couple of minutes and then just have a conversation. If you have any questions you want to ask, anything you want to say to me, I will be glad to do it. We kind of started our dinner that way.

But I want to begin by thanking you for coming here and for helping Hillary. And I wanted to just give you a little background on that. I am immensely proud of her for making this race. And we just got a good poll today from Quinnipiac College, saying that she was ahead 46 to 43, which I think is quite good. And if you understand anything about New York democratic politics, if you go into election day and you're two or three points ahead, you're going to be just fine.

So I feel good about that, and I'm very proud of her because, you know, we had actually been looking forward to this year and being able to relax a little bit. We knew we'd have to work hard for the Vice President and now for Senator Lieberman and for our crowd in Congress. But we also looked forward to the nights at the White House and enjoying our last year there and going to Camp David. And my wife gave up a lot of that because she understood that it was important to carry on the work that we have been about this last 8 years and because half a dozen or more New York House Members asked her to do it, and she got up and spent her time—she's been to every county in New York now, and she fell in love with it and figured out that what they needed and wanted was the same thing she had been working on for 30 years.

I can tell you this, for 30 years all she ever did was help everybody else, and I'm kind of proud of her for sort of venturing out on

her own now and trying to do something for herself.

I wanted to mention just a couple of things because I think it's quite important. I think it's important that the people of New York know, the voters know that what she did as First Lady and what she did before. So if you can help us with that, I'd appreciate it.

She had basically had an unprecedented level of activity in her present position over the last 8 years. She's been active in lobbying for specific pieces of legislation from the family and medical leave law to the Children's Health Insurance Program to the several bills we passed that dramatically expanded the availability of adoptions, gave tax credits to people who would adopt children with disabilities, did more for kids in foster care and for kids that are leaving the foster care system—which is the product of a lifetime of commitment for her.

She has been very active in promoting a lot of our education initiatives. She had the first-ever White House conference on early childhood and brain development, which is a very important issue; on violence against children, we had a big meeting on that that she put on. And the last thing that she did as First Lady that may have, ironically, one of the most enduring impacts was to basically run all of our millennial efforts. We came up with this slogan for the millennium that we would "honor the past and imagine the future."

And we've essentially done two things. We've had a series, probably 10 now, of lectures and dialogs at the White House on big issues that will define the next several years in the new century. The last one on exploring the ocean depths and exploring outer space and what's in those black holes. And they've been followed widely all over the world. It's been amazing. And it was just her idea to put it together. We had the famous scientist Stephen Hawking, who as you may know, has lived longer with Lou Gehrig's disease than anybody in history, still teaching at Cambridge, in England, came all the way across the ocean and gave us a lecture and talked on his little electronic machine about the whole concept of time and space and how it would change in the new century.

And then in terms of honoring the past, she set up this millennial treasures event to do everything from save the Star-Spangled Banner and the Constitution and the Bill of Rights to specific sites in communities all over America. We were just up on Martha's Vineyard. There is a 19th century tabernacle there that was used for a hundred years for Bible study in the first integrated event, racially integrated event, starting right after the Civil War in America, to Abraham Lincoln's summer home at the Old Soldiers' Home in Washington.

And last week when we were up there, 2 weeks ago, Dick Moe, the head of the National Preservation Historic Trust—Historic Preservation Trust, said that Hillary's millennium treasures effort was the single largest historic preservation movement in the history of the United States. So, she's done a good job as First Lady. She's made a difference in people's lives.

Before she ever got here, the whole—every year I was Governor and before when I was attorney general, she gave up huge portions of her income as a private lawyer to devote time to public service, just like she gave away all the money she made on that book, which was number one on the New York Times bestseller list, because she always believed in public service.

But she also served on corporate boards, learned a lot about economics, helped to bring jobs to poor areas in our State while she was trying to improve education and do all the things she's done. And along the way, she chaired the committee that rewrote all the education standards in our State. She's the best organized person I ever worked with, with the best blend of mind and heart and policy knowledge. She's perfect for the U.S. Senate, and I think she's going to win. She'll be great at it.

But all the people that are trying to beat her will spare no effort or no expense. Therefore, it's critical that you've done what you've done. If she has the resources, she'll do just fine. She won't let you down, and she'll be great in the Senate.

The only other point I want to make about that generally is, I've done everything I know to do to kind of turn our country around from the very difficult circumstances which existed

in 1991 and 1992 when I was running. Our Nation has never had the present combination of economic prosperity, social progress, the absence of domestic crisis or foreign threat, and national self-confidence we've got now. And it's very important that this work continue. And that means that every Senate seat and every House seat is pivotally important.

It also means, from my point of view, that this national election is pivotally important. A lot of you have been going to these events that I do, and I had this little mantra. I'll say it again. I say I always tell people there are three very important things you need to know about this election: It is a big election; there are big differences; and our party is the only party that wants you to know what the differences really are. What does that tell you about who you ought to vote for?

But it's actually, in fact, true. If you saw what the undecided voter said after our friends met in Philadelphia, they said, "Gosh, we like those people. They look great, and they look like they're not being mean and rightwing anymore. They're being inclusive. But what do they stand for, anyway?" That's what they said. The undecided voters said, "I liked what I saw, but I didn't hear anything. I don't know what they're going to do if they get in."

And there are a lot of stories which say, "Well, people—pretty relaxed about this election. After all, things are so good in America. Why be—you know, sort of a don't-worry-be-happy election?" And then there was a huge story on the cover of—I think it was USA Today not very long ago, saying that the people didn't know if there was any difference between the two candidates on their economic policy—the two candidates for President.

So I just would say to you—in addition to this incredible generosity tonight to Hillary, and thank you for rescheduling this, because I was in the Camp David peace talks before when we were supposed to do it—every one of you has a big network of friends and co-workers and colleagues. Maybe they're people that share your politics but may not be as energized as you are. Maybe they're people who don't share your politics at all or don't think about politics much. But

let me just say, I've lived long enough now to know that people often make mistakes, not because they're living under such adversity but because things are going along so well they just stop concentrating. And anybody who lives to be beyond the age of 30 can cite at least one time in his or her life when you have made a mistake because things were going so well you just stopped thinking.

And this is a phenomenal opportunity for us to basically decide what we want the future to look like, and then go do it. And change is the only constant, particularly in today's economy. Nothing stays the same forever. We need to make the most of this.

The second thing is there really are just huge differences here. I mean, there are big differences in economic policy, in crime policy, in health care policy, in education policy, environmental policy, right down the line. And in our policy on building one America, whether we should have a minimum wage, hate crimes legislation, employment non-discrimination legislation, whether we should preserve or get rid of a woman's right to choose—all these things are at stake here. The next President will make two to four appointments to the Supreme Court. U.S. Senators will confirm them, or not. So there's a lot at stake.

And the only other thing I want to say is let me just briefly ask you to think about this economic question, because their line—you can say their line quicker than ours, and it sounds so much better. They say, "Gosh, we're going to have this \$2 trillion surplus, and it's your money, and we're going to give it back to you in a tax cut." And we say, "Now, wait a minute. You want a \$2 trillion tax cut, but that leaves you nothing to provide prescription drugs for Medicare people or deal with long-term care or deal with the baby boomers retiring on Social Security or Medicare. And if you want to partially privatize Social Security and protect the benefits of everybody who is on Social Security, that alone costs another trillion dollars. And you haven't paid for Star Wars yet or anything else."

So in other words, how can you give it all away with a tax cut? We say, "We'll only give about a quarter as big a tax cut as they will because we think we have to have money

to invest in education, health care, the environment, and science and technology, and because we want to keep paying the debt down and get this country out of debt, and we're going to have to take care of all these baby boomers when they retire." Now, it takes me longer to say that, but let me put it to you in another way.

I asked the Council of Economic Advisers to tell me what the difference was between the \$2 trillion tax cut, being conservative and all—in other words, giving all the other side the benefit of the doubt—and the plan that I have embraced, that the Vice President and Senator Lieberman are now working on. They say that the Gore plan will keep interest rates at least—at least—one percent below the Republican plan every year for a decade. That is worth \$250 billion in home mortgages, \$30 billion in car payments, \$15 billion in college loan payments; never mind the fact that it means lower business loans, which means more business loans, more growth, more jobs, and a better stock market.

And I haven't even gotten to the main point, which is what are we going to do if the surplus doesn't materialize and we give it away in advance by giving it all away in a tax cut? I never thought—I'm up here—you may remember that during the primary I was actually attacked and, by extension, the Vice President was, for being so insistent on continuing to pay down the debt. I was attacked from the left. But the best social program is a job. And this is a more just country than it was 8 years ago because child poverty has dropped, income is going up in all quintiles, the female unemployment rate is the lowest it's been in 40 years, the single-parent household poverty rate is the lowest it's been in 46 years. The economy does that for you.

And I'm telling you, this is really—it's wrong for us to get off this path we've been on of driving this debt down, keeping the interest rates as low as we can, and letting the technology and the explosion in productivity, which was a 5 percent increase in the last quarter over the same period last year—keep taking this thing along until we bring everybody along in this economy.

And I know a lot of you have heard me say this before; I would to tell you one more

time. Their position, which is, "Let's give everybody a tax cut. It's your money, because we project it"—it really does remind me of these Publishers Clearing House, these sweepstake letters you get from Ed McMahon. "You may have won \$10 million." You may have. And everybody that went out the next day and spent the \$10 million should seriously consider supporting the Republicans in this election. [Laughter] Every single one of them. But everybody else ought to stick with us and keep this thing going.

And that's just one difference. But I'm telling you, it is—there really is—I've dealt with a Republican Congress now for 5 years, and I've found a lot of common ground with Speaker Hastert. We're going to pass this new markets legislation, I think, this year. We passed the Africa/Caribbean Basin trade bill with the help of the Republican and the Democratic leadership, where Senator Lott and Senator Daschle worked together. I work every which way I can. But I promise you, this is—it is a profound philosophical difference.

They actually believe it's okay to have tax cuts based on a hundred percent of the projected surplus. And I can tell you—people ask me all the time—Bob Rubin and I were together the other day at his portrait unveiling, and we were talking about how we started the economic team and Lloyd Bentsen was my first Treasury Secretary and all that. And all these guys came up to me—one guy says to me, he says, "Well, Mr. President, what was the principal economic reform you brought to Washington. What do you think was the principal thing you've done that led to all this incredible growth, and what was the main change?" And I said, "Arithmetic." [Laughter] "We brought back arithmetic. We stopped spending money we didn't have. We stopped projecting in a rosy way. We stopped acting like all this stuff falls from trees and the sky. And we started working in a disciplined way to make hard choices."

So I'm just telling you, Hillary needs your help; the Vice President and Senator Lieberman need your help; America needs your help. Every one of you has a network. We've got a chance to keep this economy going and spread its benefits. But the first and foremost thing we have to decide is, are

we going to continue the disciplined path of the last 8 years, taking advantage of the fact that we can do more than we could when I came in because we've turned it around, or are we going to back to the policy which says all tax cuts are good whether you've got the money or not, give it away, and worry about the consequences later?

Now, we've tried it both ways. You had 12 years of one way; now you've had 8 years the other way. And you can add up the evidence either way and draw your own conclusion. But the only way we can get in trouble is if people don't think about it like that, if they don't really think it's a big election, if they think this thing is so strong you couldn't mess it up with a stick of dynamite, if they don't understand with clarity the choice there. Clarity is our friend.

You can be positive and upbeat, and you should be. You never have to say a bad word about any of our opponents. Just talk about the differences, and let people decide. We've been around here over 200 years now because usually the people get it right if they have enough time and enough information.

The final thing I want to say is I want to thank Tom for what he said about Ireland and the Middle East. It's been the great joy of my life to labor for peace, which is the highest example of what Harry Truman said is the essential work of the Presidency, which is trying to persuade people to do what they should do without having to be asked in the first place. [Laughter]

Thank you very much.

NOTE: The President spoke at 10:15 p.m. at a private residence. In his remarks, he referred to dinner cohosts Tom Quinn and Pam and Brasim Ekpone.

### Remarks in a Roundtable Discussion on Higher Education in Chicago, Illinois

August 10, 2000

**The President.** Thank you very much, Ken. Ladies and gentlemen, thank you for this warm welcome. I didn't know if we could stir up so many students in the middle of the summer. [Laughter] But I'm delighted to see you all here.